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the Navigator, the lecture touches, however briefly, upon every important point of exploration and discovery down to the voyages of Cortez. Even more complex and comprehensive is the subject of the "Renaissance." It was the age of the revival of Greek learning and humanism, and also the age of endless bloodshed and cruelty. Every one penned sentimental poems after Petrarch, while, at the same time, Machiavelli wrote his famous treatise. Savonarola thundered against vice and vanity, while Pope Alexander VI and his children practised every crime to such an extent that even to-day the name of Borgia is synonymous with monster. And yet, for all its complexity, Lord Acton treats of the subject in one lecture in such a way that no important group of facts is left untouched. And the net result of reading this portion is an awakened desire in the student to penetrate further into that brightly colored, vivid period. Some of the other topics dealt with in similar fashion are "Luther," "The Thirty Years' War," "The English Revolution," "Lewis XIV," "Peter the Great" and "The American Revolution." Every sentence carries with it the conviction of truth, and every page creates an impulse to delve deeper into the subject-matter. And before long we become at one with the author in his idea that the study of history "fulfils its purpose even if it only makes us wiser, without producing books, and gives us the gift of historical thinking, which is better than historical learning."

HENRY JAMES FORMAN.

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#### A NEW HUMORIST.

IF contemporary fiction is to be judged and classified according to the standards which have prevailed for the past eight or ten years, Mr. Nesbit must be credited with having, in "The Gentleman Ragman,"\* tapped what is practically a new vein of humor, for to find the plausible suggestion for its spirit and atmosphere one must turn back to the rollicking, whimsical and yet always half-serious pages of "Tom Sawyer" and "Huckleberry Finn." This is a bold comparison, and one which, even with the necessary modification, constitutes bold praise. Yet it is an inevitable

\* "The Gentleman Ragman." By Wilbur Nesbit. New York: Harper & Brothers.

comparison, and the praise is far from being entirely undeserved. For while "The Gentleman Ragman" has in detail many minor faults, and as a whole is singularly uneven, in strict fairness all this must be subordinated to the frank recognition of a genuine achievement. Mr. Nesbit has succeeded in creating an environment. The Gentleman Ragman is one Asbury Dabney Colquhoun, otherwise known as the Emigger—a local corruption of the old French *émigré*—a Virginian gentleman of lineage and mettle, who, having left his native State to avoid, on account of reasons which are to his lasting credit and which in no way reflect upon his personal courage, an hereditary feud, settles down in Plainville in the humble capacity from which the story takes its name, and speedily turns his Quixotic impulses to practical account. The Emigger, when he first drifts into the office of the "Chronicle," that redoubtable moulder of public opinion conducted by the eminent Eli James Bashford, "late of Cincinnati, Ohio," seems a rather formidable figure of a man, tall and dark-eyed, and with a long black drooping mustache that in the mind of Johnnie Thompson, the youthful narrator of the tale, conjures up visions of Simon Legree in the "Uncle Tom's Cabin" pictures. But his voice is not that of Legree, and instead of the anticipated truculent outburst his first remark is a genial interrogation as to whether his young interlocutor is "any connection of the Thompsons of Virginia," which amiable method of breaking down the barriers of formality he is wont to use with every person with whom he comes in contact. Lowly and unromantic as is the occupation by which the Emigger introduces himself to Plainville, his force of character and his quaint chivalry make him from the beginning a decided factor in the life of the little community, sharing its furtive tragedies, and participating, with a quaint, unconscious gravity in its droll pastimes and social diversions.

The originality of "The Gentleman Ragman" lies almost wholly in its characterizations and descriptions. The main thread of the narrative is one of the oldest in fiction, although here it is handled with a genuine freshness and vigor. There is the expected Tempter who enters the tale in the person of Arthur Keene Branthorpe, "Stage Director and Impresario," who visits Plainville for the purpose of getting up theatrical productions by home talent of his own play, "The Last Shot," for the benefit of the Sons of Veterans, and persuades Annie Davis, the stage-struck

heroine of the story, to leave her home for the purpose of meeting him in a near-by city, where he will be able, he promises, to embark her upon a great dramatic career. Luckily part of his plans go astray, and Annie Davis, after an unpleasant but not irrevocable experience, through the agency of the Emigger and Oscar Ferguson, Plainville's juvenile Sherlock Holmes, is brought back to her family and friends. Branthorpe later appears with a travelling theatrical troupe, but after an encounter with the Emigger that is marked with plenty of vigor and spirit, finds his courage ooze at the crucial moment, and makes a hurried escape by means of a strange horse and buggy. Add to this comparatively time-worn complication some exciting episodes pertaining to the invasion of the Emigger's adopted town by his feudal enemy Pinkney Sanger, the resulting pistol battle in which Sanger comes out second best, the Emigger's love-affair with Annie Davis, and one or two other love-affairs, and you have briefly all that there is to "The Gentleman Ragman" as a story pure and simple.

But if the action be slight, there is never the impression of its being strung out or thin, for with the background of Plainville, and the acquaintance of Eli James Bashford, and Oscar Ferguson, and Ike Peters, and Ira Growley, and Mrs. Flora Beavers, the action becomes of very secondary importance. The editor of the country newspaper is by no means a new type in fiction, but one must look far to find a more delightful specimen of the tribe than Mr. Bashford, whose only explanation of his reason for coming to Plainville was that some one had told him that there was a fine opening for a young man, and that while he was looking for the opening somebody had pushed him in. Then there is Ike Peters, called by Mr. Bashford the "before-taking exhibit of Plainville," an incorrigible reader of medicine advertisements and almanacs, forever boasting of his symptoms, always buying the first bottle offered by the travelling patent-medicine salesman, no matter what it is meant to cure. Had he not had false teeth "he would let the travelling dentists pull them for nothing to exhibit their painless system." Nor is it possible to overlook the bouncing Mrs. Flora Beavers, who finds her affinity in the amorous Bashford, whose mania for collecting premiums has led her to the acquisition of the most extraordinary accumulation of odds and ends—swings and centre-tables, photograph-albums, panels of kittens over the mantels, yards of puppies, imitation

oil-paintings of Washington Crossing the Delaware, parlor suits, bookcases and sets of Dickens and Shakespeare. And a youth who would have proved a comrade dear to the heart of Tom Sawyer is Oscar Ferguson, with his revolvers, his handcuffs and his nickel-plated detective star, a follower of clues, a delver into ciphers, a jotter-down of mysterious notes that strangely enough serve a purpose, who meets Bashford's attempts at sprightly badinage with the portentous retort, "We cannot divulge matters to the press at this stage of the investigation." For this generous gathering of interesting people, for the quaint humor and the ring of homely sincerity, "The Gentleman Ragman," as a book by itself, will demand of the discriminating reader much more than mere passing attention. But, above all, the discriminating reader will lay it aside with the conviction that good as the book is as a story, it is far more distinctive as a promise than as an actual achievement. And by him, Mr. Nesbit will not be lightly forgotten, but will be remembered as one who should go far.

ARTHUR BARTLETT MAURICE.

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"THE FEDERAL POWER OVER CARRIERS AND CORPORATIONS."\*

THIS is the book of a lawyer, but one written less for lawyers than for those, whatever may be their lines of life, who are now studying from the historical standpoint the Rooseveltian theory of constitutional government.

The point of departure in all discussion of the particular subject of the volume is the opinion of Chief-Justice Marshall, delivered in 1824, in the case of the Fulton steamboats, known as *Gibbons vs. Ogden*. It is there that, after observing that the Constitution of the United States contains an enumeration rather than a definition of powers, and that "an enumeration presupposes something not enumerated," he declares that, as no power over the completely internal commerce of a State was among those enumerated in the grant to Congress, none was entrusted to it. But what is that "completely internal commerce"? It is, he continues, the commerce "carried on between man and man in a State, or between different parts of the same State, and which

\* "The Federal Power over Carriers and Corporations." By E. Parma-lee Prentice. New York: The Macmillan Co.